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Message Text

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 OMB-01 EB-11 NEA-10 IO-14 DRC-01 AID-20

COME-00 TRSE-00 /170 W
---------- 046153
R 191822Z DEC 73
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6599
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 14960

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, EIND, UK, CG
SUBJECT: MOBUTU VISIT TO UK--WRAP-UP

SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO A FOREIGN OFFICE SOURCE BRITISH WERE SATISFIED WITH PRESIDENT MOBUTU'S RECENTLY CONCLUDED STATE VISIT TO BRITAIN, HAVING ACHIEVED THEIR OBJECTIVE OF LAYING ON THE POMP AND CEREMONY WITHOUT INADVERTENTLY OFFENDING THEIR PRICKLY GUEST. VERY LITTLE OF SUBSTANCE WAS BUILT INTO MOBUTU'S PROGRAM AND EVEN THAT WAS LARGELY WASHED OUT BY A COMBINATION OF HIGH LEVEL BRITISH PREOCCUPATION WITH MULTIPLE CRISES AND CURTAILMENT OF A PLANNED PRIVATE VISIT BY MOBUTU. THE PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN SECRETARY TRIED TO ENLIST MOBUTU AS AN INTERMEDIARY WITH AFRICAN AND ARAB LEADERS TO CONVEY THEIR VIEWS ON RHODESIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST BUT WITH ONLY MARGINAL EFFECT. IN SPEAKING TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, MOBUTU WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO REASSURE EXISTING BRITISH INVESTORS IN ZAIRE AND TO ENCOURAGE NEW INVESTMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. R. A. NEILSON, ASSISTANT HEAD OF FCO'S EAST AFRICAN
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DEPARTMENT HAS GIVEN US A COMPREHENSIVE ACCOUNT OF

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PRESIDENT MOBUTU'S STATE VISIT TO BRITAIN DECEMBER 11-
14. FOLLOWING ARE THE SALIENT POINTS.

2. "CEREMONY AND PROTOCOL" - DESPITE THE FACT THAT THERE
WAS NO GREAT ENTHUSIASM DISPLAYED BY ANY OF THE
ZAIRIAN VISITORS, BRITISH FEEL THAT VISIT WENT WELL AND
THERE WERE NO EMBARRASSING SLIP-UPS. THIS WAS A MAJOR
BRITISH OBJECTIVE AND THEY ARE PARTICULARLY PLEASED IN
THE LIGHT OF THEIR UNHAPPY EXPERIENCE WITH FOREIGN
MINISTER N'GUZA LAST YEAR. THEY REGARD ABSENCE OF
ENTHUSIASM AS NORMAL ZAIRIAN TRAIT. WHEN ASKED IF THINGS
WERE GOING WELL MEMBERS OF THE PARTY INVARIABLY REPLIED,
"CA VA, CA VA BIEN." QUEEN AND MOBUTU WERE NOT EXACTLY
ON SAME WAVE LENGTH AND SHE KEPT ASKING SENIOR MINISTERS,
"WHY IS HE HERE?"--A QUESTION EASIER TO ASK THAN TO
ANSWER. HOWEVER, BOTH DID WHAT WAS EXPECTED OF THEM AND
GOT ON TOLERABLY WELL.

3. "OFFICIAL DISCUSSIONS" - UNFORTUNATELY, VISIT CAME AT
A TIME WHEN SENIOR BRITISH OFFICIALS WERE ALMOST COM-
PLETELY PREOCCUPIED WITH THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION AND
THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS. MOBUTU SAW BOTH PRIME
MINISTER HEATH AND FOREIGN SECRETARY SIR ALEC DOUGLAS-
HOME ON DECEMBER 13. CONVERSATIONS CENTERED ALMOST
ENTIRELY ON RHODESIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST, ALTHOUGH THE
FOREIGN OFFICE HAD HOPED THAT SOME BILATERAL MATTERS
COULD BE DISCUSSED. IN PARTICULAR THEY WOULD HAVE LIKED
TO USE THE OCCASION TO SIGN AT LEAST ONE OF THREE PENDING
AGREEMENTS--CIVIL AIR, A ONE MILLION POUND AID PACKAGE
OR A PROPOSED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. HOWEVER,
TECHNICAL PROBLEMS RANGING FROM MAJOR IN THE CASE OF CIV-
IL AIR TO MINOR IN THE CASE OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
(GETTING APPROVAL OF THE FRENCH TEXT) TOGETHER WITH
MOBUTU'S TIGHT SCHEDULE THWARTED EFFORTS TO WRAP UP ANY
OF THESE OUTSTANDING PROPOSALS. IF MOBUTU HAD STAYED
ON FOR HIS PRIVATE VISIT AS PLANNED, THE TECHNICAL ASSIS-
TANCE AGREEMENT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SIGNED. BUT HIS DEPAR-
TURE EARLY DECEMBER 15 FOR A SWING THROUGH THE ARAB
WORLD KILLED THIS POSSIBILITY.

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4. "RHODESIA AND MIDDLE EAST" - BOTH HEATH AND SIR ALEC
PRESSED MOBUTU HARD TO BACK BRITAIN'S POSITION ON
RHODESIA, BUT DIDN'T SEEM TO MAKE MUCH HEADWAY. AT ONE
POINT HEATH ASKED MOBUTU IF HE WOULD AGREE THAT BRITAIN
COULD NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES TAKE MILITARY ACTION TO
FORCE A SOLUTION. MOBUTU EVADED A DIRECT ANSWER SAYING
"BRITAIN HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SETTLING THE
RHODESIA PROBLEM." ON THE MIDDLE EAST THE BRITISH LEAD-

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ERS HOPED TO USE MOBUTU TO CONVEY THEIR POINT OF VIEW TO
ARAB LEADERS. MOBUTU SAID THAT HIS COUNTRY AND OTHER
BLACK AFRICAN STATES DID NOT REALLY HAVE MUCH IN COMMON
WITH THE ARABS AND DID NOT NECESSARILY AGREE WITH ALL
THEIR POLICIES. BUT THE AFRICANS APPRECIATED THAT THE
ARABS "HAD SUFFERED A GREAT HUMILIATION." MOBUTU DIS-
CLAIMED HAVING ANY INFLUENCE WITH THE ARAB LEADERS BUT

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SAID, "WE HAVE AN EAR WITH THEM." THE BRITISH WERE
PUZZLED BY THIS ENIGMATIC REMARK AND THOUGHT IT MAY HAVE
BEEN THROWN IN JUST TO KEEP THE DIALOGUE GOING WITHOUT
COMMITTING HIMSELF TO UNDERTAKE ANY MISSION IN THE MID-
DLE EAST ON BEHALF OF HMG. BRITISH BELIEVE IT LIKELY,
HOWEVER, THAT IDEA FOR MOBUTU'S SUDDENLY CONCEIVED MIDDLE
EAST TRIP (REPLACING HIS SCHEDULED PRIVATE STAY IN
BRITAIN) GREW OUT OF THIS DISCUSSION.

5. "BRITISH INVESTMENT IN ZAIRE" - IN HIS REMARKS AT THE
LONDON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LUNCHEON AND AT THE GUILDHALL
DINNER, MOBUTU WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO ASSURE HIS LIS-
TENERS THAT THE NOVEMBER 30 MEASURES DID NOT MEAN THAT

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FOREIGN INVESTMENT WAS NO LONGER WELCOME IN ZAIRE. HE WAS QUOTED BY THE PRESS AS SAYING, "I HAVE NO INTENTION TO UNDERTAKE NATIONALIZATION. NEITHER WILL I EXPROPRIATE PRIVATE PROPERTY WITHOUT REASON. I HAVE NEVER DONE SO AND I NEVER WILL." SPEAKING WITHOUT NOTES AT THE GUILD-HALL, MOBUTU ELABORATED ON THIS THEME, SAYING THAT HIS MAIN TARGET WHEN HE CAME TO POWER WAS UNION MINIERE WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED BY LEOPOLD II FOR HIS PRIVATE PROFIT. OTHER INVESTORS, PROVIDED THEY FOLLOW THE RULES, HAVE
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NEVER BEEN HARASSED AND ARE INDEED WELCOME. HIS REMARKS WERE PITCHED TO ENCOURAGE EXISTING BRITISH INVESTORS TO REMAIN IN ZAIRE AND FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLE. ACCORDING TO NEILSON, ONLY BRITISH INVESTMENT APPARENTLY TO BE AFFECTED BY THE NOVEMBER 30 MEASURES WOULD BE THE UNILEVER PLANTATION. BUT LEVER MANAGEMENT IS NOT PARTIC-ULARLY CONCERNED BECAUSE PLANTATION HAS BECOME A MARGINALLY PROFITABLE ENTERPRISE. POSSIBILITY THAT IT WILL CONTINUE TO BE RUN AS A JOINT ENTERPRISE WITH THE ZAIRIAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED. COMMENT: THERE SEEMS TO BE A FAIR AMOUNT OF LONG-TERM INTEREST IN ZAIRE AMONG POTENTIAL BRITISH INVESTORS, BUT AT THE MOMENT THEY ARE PUT OFF BY ZAIRE'S DEBT SERVICING RATIO AND IT IS REPORTED THAT THE EXPORT CREDITS GUARANTEE DEPARTMENT IS CURRENTLY WITHHOLDING COVER FOR SEVERAL PROJECTS BY BRITISH COMPANIES.

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